

THE JAMES LEMEN FORT
WATERLOO, ILLINOIS
MONROE COUNTY

HABS. NO. ILL. - 230
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Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings
PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
DISTRICT NO. ILL.-2

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
•EDGAR E. LUNDEEN - DISTRICT OFFICER•
CORN BELT BANK BUILDING - BLOOMINGTON ILL.

X

THE JAMES LEMEN FORT
Near Waterloo, Monroe County, Illinois

Owner. Mr. William C. Fredrichs.

Date of Erection. About 1810.

Architect. None.

Builder. Unknown.

Present Condition. The dining-living room portion appears to be original, with the remainder added at a later date. A new roof of asphalt shingles has been applied.

Number of Stories. One and one-half.

Materials of Construction. Solid brick walls and foundations, except appendages which are wood. Oak rafters, pine floors. Interior partitions, wood studs, plastered.

Other Existing Records. None.

Additional Data. In the year 1786, the first settlement at New Design seems to have been made. The name is said to have arisen from the circumstance that James Lemen, the founder of the colony, observed that he had a "new design" to make a settlement south of Bellfontaine. The New Design settlement, previous to 1800, contained the largest American colony in Illinois. It was the common rendezvous of the immigration from Kentucky and Virginia. Its founders were attracted by the elevated and beautiful country, then prairie, from which the courses of both the

Kaskaskia and the Mississippi rivers could be traced. The settlement rapidly increased in size and by 1800, the population was estimated at about 250. The location of James Lemen's house nearly marked the center of the colony.

James Lemen was born in Berkeley County, Virginia in 1760. In 1777, the war of the Revolution, he enlisted in the Virginia forces. He came to Illinois in 1786, by flat boat from Pittsburgh, on the Ohio, and Mississippi to Kaskaskia. He professed the Baptist religion and was an earnest opponent of slavery.

His first dwelling was a log cabin, followed by a brick house, the subject of our records, about 1810. This was the first brick house erected within the limits of Monroe County. It stands on the northwest part of claim 502, survey 395. The tract was ceded to James Lemen in right of his military service.

It is said that this house was used as a fort during the war of 1812, and patched openings resembling small loop holes on the northeast face of the building seem to bear out this statement.

Nearby is the graveyard where rests the remains of several members of the Lemen family. James Lemen died in January, 1823, his wife in 1840.

References:

History of Randolph, Monroe and Perry Counties, 1888.

(Approved)

Walter E. Lundeen
District Officer

3/11/37

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